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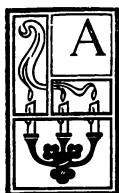
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Do You See, My Dear?

By Helen Mackay



LICE, the charming Marquise de Marvern, and her very smart old husband were walking, as they walked every morning of the season, in the Avenue de la Reine Marguerite, with the motor fol-

lowing at a crawl, and Harris a few respectful English steps behind, carrying the wraps and guarding the little dogs.

The marquis was telling one of his long stories, saying, "Do you see, my dear?" with every other sentence. The way he had of saying that, meaninglessly and always, was one of the little things that seemed to Alice to be driving her mad. It seemed to her on this horrible morning that she could have endured everything,—his slow step, his unceasingly courteous conversation, the panting of the automobile behind them, the correct presence of Harris, the yelping of the little dogs, even the beating of the wretched thoughts in her own brain,—if only he wouldn't have said, "Do you see, my dear?"



THE LOTUS IT was an exquisite spring day. The Bois was full of lilac and acacia bloom, blackbirds and thrushes, and pretty women, automobiles, and fine horses with clinking harnesses.

Everyone was there. The Marverns must always be stopping to speak to somebody. The marquis's story was always being interrupted and always taken up again; but the things people said to her, the things she had to say to them, were always broken in upon by the refrain that Alice's thoughts beat out like little hot hammers in her own brain, every reiteration a pain, distinct and separate, almost physical:

"Philippe never loved me, never loved me, never loved me..."

—Yes, everyone is in town now. Yes, I know the D'Arbelles are back. No, I have not seen Philippe since his marriage. Yes, I hear he adores her...

"He never loved me, never loved me..." Was she saying it aloud? Why would they all insist on talking of him? Was it because they all knew? Could they hear the hammering thoughts?

—Yes, they say she is charming. No, I have not met her. Yes, very likely they are here

this morning. Yes, everyone knows he is quite mad about her.

"He never loved me, never loved me..." She was trying to realize that at any minute she might come face to face with him, and the bride he so adored, here before all these people. She was trying to understand that she must not faint or cry out, that she must not let anyone see. And this was only the beginning of it. She would be meeting him, meeting them, always now, everywhere, before everybody, as they all went round and round like gold fish in their globe. And she must never let him see. She was trying to dull herself by suffering to suffering, as though when the pain were past bearing she might grow numb of it:

"He never loved me, never loved me..."

The marquis was saying:

—And then—do you see my dear?—the policeman took her by the arm and put her out, and one would have thought that would have finished her, but not at all...

"Never loved me..."

—She simply went round to the stage door, and said he had sent for her to come to his dressing-room.



THE "Never loved me, never loved me, never
LOTUS loved me..."



AND then the dreadful meeting came. One moment there was the coming and going of people all about her, the next only Philippe. She was looking straight at Philippe and at his bride, so cruelly happy and pretty and young. Her own eyes, that gave everything she had to him, met Philippe's eyes, that gave nothing, that had never given anything, had demanded only. She could not have told why she did not cry out to him while all the world heard, or fall on her knees to him while all the world saw. In reality she only nodded and smiled, and it was over. But only for this time. It would come again, over and over again, as they went round in the goldfish globe.

—So of course, do you see, my dear? said her husband, they let her pass, and when she came to his dressing-room door ... Alice, I will go on talking as if nothing had happened, and you must try to listen. Do you see, my dear? Because people are watching us. I am so sorry, I have always been so sorry. Did you think I

had n't known?

It seemed to Alice that she was falling and the marquis was holding out his frail hand to her.



—Do you see, my dear? If I could have helped you by dying, I would have done so, I was so sorry.

—But Gérard, it was ... How can you ... If you know what it was?

The marquis said:

—I am so sorry that they gave you to an old man like me, do you see, my dear? I am sorry a man like D'Arbelle came into your life. For a time I thought it might have helped to have me dead and out of the way. Then I saw that it would only make things worse; that someday you might—do you see, my dear?—have need of me, be even glad to turn to me.

He spoke so quietly as they walked that nobody passing by, not even Harris close behind, could have known he was leaving his story unfinished.

—Perhaps now, for a time, till this is past, as all things pass,—do you see, my dear?—you may be a little glad to have me.

—Oh, Gérard, do you care like that?

THE
LOTUS

—Yes, he said.

—But I am not worth it, Gérard. Gérard,
you are a fool, a fool.

—I am glad to be a fool for you, said the
marquis. Do you see, my dear?

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